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THE 'MISOGONUS' AND LAURENCE JOHNSON.

The following letter was printed in *The Nation*, New York, March 16, 1899:

THE 'MISOGONUS' AND LAURENCE JOHNSON THE MARTYR.

To the Editor of the Nation :

SIR: The 'Misogonus,' of which Collier long ago gave an analysis, and which Prof. Brandl of Berlin has just edited (with many curiosities in text and notes) in his 'Quellen des weltlichen Dramas in England' (Strassburg, 1898), is so early and so interesting a specimen of English university comedy that any information about it is worth recording.

The manuscript which has preserved the play is signed, under the list of *dramatis personae*, 'Laurentius Bariwna. Kettheringe. Die 20 Novembris, Anno 1577.' The fifth letter of the surname is said by Collier to be a Greek omega; Prof. Brandl makes it a *w*; Dr. F. I. Carpenter, of the University of Chicago, who has examined the manuscript, assures me that Collier is right. No attempt to identify this Bar-Jona has been made, so far as I know. Brandl contents himself with remarking: 'hebräisch=Taubensohn.' Clearly we should seek in Bar-Jona not a Semite, but a scholarly Englishman who for some reason (in jest or earnest) wished either to conceal his name or to play a verbal trick with it.

'Bar' is, of course, 'son,' and we may without temerity recognize in 'Laurentius Bariwna' plain *Laurence Johnson*.

Laurence Johnson is no mythical being. He was fellow of Brasenose College in 1569, and applied for his B.A. on November 25, 1572. Certain conditions were imposed, and it is not known whether he fulfilled them or not. At all events, he went to Douay in 1573, to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and later to Rheims. In 1577 he took priest's orders, and in the same year he returned to England as a missionary. In 1581 he was indicted for treason, being associated in the

indictment with the celebrated Jesuit Edmund Campion and several other priests. On the 30th of May, 1582, he was hanged at Tyburn. We have two accounts of his execution, both from eye-witnesses. One is from the pen of Anthony Munday, who had given evidence for the prosecution ('A breefe and true reporte of the Execucion of certaine Tray-tours,' 1582, reprinted by Collier in his Shakespeare Society edition of Munday's 'John a Kent and John a Cumber,' 1852). The other is from a friendly hand, and may be found in the 'Concertatio Ecclesiae Catholicae in Anglia adversus Calvinopapistas et Puritanos,' Treves, 1588, folio 93 v^o ff. Johnson was not a Jesuit, but a secular priest.

On his return to England in 1577, Johnson had assumed the alias 'Laurence *Richardson*,' his father's Christian name being Richard, and it is in this same year that we find him (if my conjecture is correct) concealing his real identity under the punning disguise of 'Bariona' in the 'Misogonus' manuscript.

A reviewer in the *Literarisches Centralblatt* for February 11 (col. 206) remarks that 'Laurentius Bariona' stands in the British Museum Catalogue as the author of a 'Cometographia, London, 1578.' This book I have not had a chance to examine. Its title, however, indicates that the author was a Christian: 'Cometographia quaedam Lampadis aerae qu[a]e 10 die Novemb. apparuit Anno a virgineo partu 1577,' and we need not hesitate, provisionally, to ascribe it to Laurence Johnson. One might even conjecture that he adopted the pseudonym for the special purpose of this book. At all events, the signature in the *Misogonus* MS. and the date of the comet are less than a month apart. The 'Cometographia' was doubtless not so much astronomical as prodigious and exemplary, like T. T. [wine?]'s English book on the same subject, which appeared in the same year: 'A View of certain wonderful effects . . . newly conferred with the presignifications of the Comete, or blasing Star, which appered in the Southwest vpō the .x. day of Nouem. the yere last past 1577.' The Comet of 1577 is that which gave Tycho Brahe the materials for his famous investigations on the parallax of comets, and the whole of part ii. of his 'Opera Omnia' (Frankfort, 1648) is devoted to it. Some account of the ominous character

ascribed to this 'blazing star' may be conveniently found in 'Stanislai Lubieniecii Historia Cometarum,' Amsterdam, 1666, pp. 373-7, whence we learn that, after the disastrous campaign of Don Sebastian in Africa, the comet was by many thought to have prefigured the death of Sebastian, Muley Mohammed, and Abdel-Melek. For contemporary impressions, see the letter quoted in Strype's 'Annals of the Reformation,' bk. ii, chap. 10, ed. 1725, ii, 510. American readers may like to consult Increase Mather, 'ΚΟΜΗΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ. Or a Discourse Concerning Comets,' Boston, 1683, pp. 101-3.

The prologue to the 'Misogonus' is signed 'Thomas Richardes.' A person of this name was one of Johnson's fellow-students at Oxford (college unknown), and applied for his B.A. on December 7, 1571 ('Register of the University of Oxford,' ed. by A. Clark, II., 13, Oxford Historical Society Publications, Vol. XII.), shortly before the date of Johnson's application.

The authorship of the 'Misogonus' is still an open question. If, as Collier thinks, the play was written in 1560, the author may have been neither Johnson nor Richardes.

Information with regard to Johnson may be found in the following works: Anthony à Wood, 'Fasti Oxonienses,' ed. Bliss, I., 189 (cf. 477, 478); 'Register of the University of Oxford,' ed. Clark, as above, II., 18; Foster, 'Alumni Oxonienses,' 1500-1714, II., 815; Challoner, 'Memoirs of Missionary Priests,' Manchester, 1803, I., 54 ff; Richard Simpson, 'Edmund Campion,' 1867, pp. 230-2, 309; Henry Foley, 'Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus,' II. (revised edition), 170 ff., III., 42, IV., 359; letter from C. Hodgson to L. Johnson, April, 1580, 'Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Addenda, 1580-1625,' p. 4.¹

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CAMBRIDGE, Mass., March 8, 1899.

¹ [To these should have been added 'Douay Diaries,' ed. Knox, pp. 5, 8, 25, 117, 118, 126, 181, 188, 260, 275, 290,—references for which I am indebted to Dr. Peile and Mr. Albert Matthews: see note 3, p. 340, below.]

In so brief a note it was impossible to discuss the details of the identification. In particular, there was no space for an examination of the *Misogonus* itself with a view to determining whether the sentiments of the author agreed with those of Laurence Johnson of Brasenose and Douay. Such an examination, indeed, was not absolutely necessary, since the authorship of the play was not claimed for Laurence Johnson. Besides, the whole discussion was left as provisional, until a sight could be had of the tantalizing *Cometographia*. A careful copy of the book has since been made for me, and this copy settles one question forever: Laurence Johnson the Martyr was NOT the Laurentius Bariona of the *Misogonus* manuscript.

That the *Cometographia* is the work of the same person who wrote his name on the title-page of the *Misogonus* manuscript is certain. For the book begins with a dedicatory epistle from the author to Edmund Bishop of Peterborough, signed 'Laur. Bariona' and dated Kettering, January 20th, 1578.¹ The epistle asks the bishop to make the work public if he sees fit, but to burn it if he thinks it likely to do harm. 'Laur. Bariona' was no Romanist, but an enthusiastic Anglican and a fervent admirer of Queen Elizabeth. Persuaded that the comet is a 'precurse of fierce events,' he is shocked at the unconcern with which some persons view it. 'Interim papistæ in vtramque aurem securi dormiunt, et summam rerum omnium perturbationem adesse gestiunt, et iam pristinam superstitionem reuiuiscere cogitant.' This passage alone would determine the question of his religion. His feelings toward the queen are manifested in an eloquent 'Apostrophe ad Elizabetham illustrissimam Anglorum Reginam,' in which he speaks of the Christian state 'quam ex intermortuis reliquijs in vitam reuocasti,' 'Que enim vnquam princeps a mundo condito tam bene merita fuit de ecclesia dei, vt que a papistica Tyrannide, in Christianam libertatem vindicauit?' 'Haec nostra

¹ 'Vale Ketteringa Januarij 20. 1578.'

Nympha,' he calls her, 'cælitus procul dubio ad nos delapsa.'

Though the *Cometographia* demolished the suggestion that Laurentius Bariona was Laurence Johnson the martyr, it confirmed the theory that he was not a Semite, but a scholarly Englishman. The nationality of Bariona comes out abundantly in the treatise.¹ The English are *nos* and *nostrates*; England is 'haec nostra florentissima et nobilissima Insula;' the queen is 'nostra Nympha.' Bariona had held some public office, for at the beginning of the dedication he speaks of having been 'a publicis negotiis aliquantulum liberatus' a few days before. He even makes a pun on 'natural' in the English sense of 'foolish.'² His scholarship appears sufficiently in the treatise itself, which is fluently and at times eloquently written, and abounds in Greek words and in quotations from the Latin poets.

Such being the facts, the interpretation of 'Laurentius Bariōna' as Laurence Johnson still seemed to be sound, though the Oxford man had proved to be an impossible candidate. Inquiries made at Cambridge confirmed the interpretation. A Laurence Johnson matriculated as a sizar at Christ's College on May 26th, 1570. He received the degree of B.A. in 1573-4, and that of M.A. in 1577.³ This fits perfectly. Laurentius Bariōna signs the *Misogonus* MS. 'Kettheringe, Die 20 Novembris, Anno 1577,' and the same Bariona dates his *Cometographia* dedication

¹ En vobis Galli, En vobis Hispani, En vobis Germani, rem miraculo quouis magis admirandam. Cum vos sub Regibus vestris, et ducibus bellicosus in castris excubatis, insanis seditionum fluctibus, tanquam Furijs quibusdam Exagitati, nos sub Regina nostra . . . pace fruimur iucundissima.

² Speaking of certain philosophers whose opinions on comets do not please him, he remarks: 'Miror ex cuius cerebro hæc tam naturalis (puta me Anglice loqui) Philosophia deprompta sit. Paulus huic satisfacit cum dicit. Sapientia huius mundi stultitia est apud Deum.'

³ This information I owe to my friend Mr. Albert Matthews, who had the kindness to make inquiries of the Registry of the University (Mr. J. Willis Clark) and of the Master of Christ's College (Dr. John Peile).

Kettering, Jan. 20, 1578. He was a young man and of humble family.¹

It remained to be seen if the 'Thomas Richardes' who signed the *Misogonus* prologue² and the Thomas Warde whose name follows that of Richards in paler ink,³ could also be identified at Cambridge. An obliging note from the Rev. Fred'k. Faning, Deputy Registrary, informs me that Thomas Richards of Trinity College proceeded B.A. in 1571 and that Thomas Ward of Jesus College took the degree of B.A. in 1580.

It should be added that the *Misogonus* refers to Cambridge in act iii, scene 3, v. 72 (Brandl, p. 472), where Madge, in admiration of the pretended physician's learning, cries: 'Waunt him as bene at Cambridge, good lande, good lande.' Kettering is not far from the University city.

The question of the authorship of the *Misogonus* is by no means settled by this identification of 'Bariona,' and I see no means of settling it at all. No one can read the *Cometographia*, however, without recognizing the cleverness of Laurence Johnson and feeling tempted to ascribe the play to him. The religious opinions of the playwright are consonant with those expressed by Bariona.

Nothing, then, opposes such an ascription except the supposed date of the *Misogonus*, 1560, suggested by Collier and accepted by Brandl. This date was arrived at by adding 24 (the age of Eugonus) to 1536, the date of the Rising in the North. At first sight, the computation is reasonable, for Codrus says the birth of Eugonus was 'after the risinge rection ith nrth' (iv, 1, 119, p. 474). A more careful scrutiny of the data, however, shows that Collier was over-hasty in his reckoning.

¹ In the *Cometographia* Bariona says that he is 'abiectissime conditionis et sortis.' In another place he remarks: 'Meum vero sentio quam sit exiguum ingenium et experientia quam puerilis.'

² Brandl, *Quellen*, p. 422.

³ This signature is mentioned by neither Collier nor Brandl. It was observed by Dr. F. I. Carpenter (see *Modern Language Notes*, xiv, 273).

Nobody in the play says that Eugonus was born immediately after the Rising in the North. A mere reading of the passage (p. 480, ll. 117-128) shows this beyond a doubt. Crito has bidden the rustics 'lay their heads together,' and compute truly 'how many year ago' it is 'since [Eugonus] were born.'¹ Codrus begins with the remark that 'it were after the risinge rection ith north' (l. 119). This gives a *terminus a quo* to certain calculations, but these are abandoned before the number 24 is arrived at. The last-named figure is the result of a sudden attack of memory on the part of Alison, who recollects that the young heir was born a year before 'our Tom,' whose age she of course knows without stopping to figure it out. We have, then, no right to add 24 to the date of the Rising in the North in 1536 and so to produce 1560, with Collier (II, 464) and Brandl (p. lxxviii).² The mention of Paul's weathercock (p. 468, l. 3), used by Collier but not by Brandl, is not significant at all. Cacurgus merely remarks that Codrus 'has no more witt then the wether-cocke of Poles,'—a proverbial kind of comparison which does not necessarily imply that the weathercock was standing when the play was written.

It appears, then, that there is no difficulty of chronology in the way of ascribing the *Misogonus* to Laurence Johnson, the author of the *Cometographia*.

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SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1900.

¹ Philogonus has already said, 'Its twenty yeare since this was done' (p. 466, l. 245), referring to the 'sending away' of Eugonus.

² Such computations as Collier's have also a fundamental weakness. There is no dramatic canon that binds a poet to make the present tense coincide with the year of our Lord in which a play is written or acted!